

MINUTES
UTAH SOIL CONSERVATION COMMISSION (USCC) MEETING

January 22, 2004
Salt Lake City

ATTENDANCE

Chairman (Standing USCC Ex-officio):
Cary G. Peterson, *Commissioner, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food*

Appointed Soil Conservation District (SCD)
Supervisor USCC Members:
S. Bruce Karren, Acting for Paul Leishman, *Zone 1*
Dee Waldron, *Zone 2*
Wendell Stenbridge, Acting for Richard Saunders, *Zone 3*
Stanley Wood, *Zone 4*
Ralph Staheli, *Zone 5*
Willard "Bill" Rasmussen, *Zone 6*
Robert Barry, *Zone 7 Acting Alternate*

Appointed SCD Alternate USCC Members:
Ben Thurgood, *Zone 2*
Allen Henrie, *Zone 5*
Edward Bench Jr., *Zone 6*

Standing Ex-Officio USCC Members:
Larry Johnson, President, *Utah Association of Conservation Districts (UACD)*
Sherman Hoskins, Deputy Director, *Utah Dept. Natural Resources*
Dr. Phillip Rasmussen, *UT State University (USU) Extension*
Don Ostler, *Water Quality Division, Utah Department of Environmental Quality*

Conservation Partners:
Harry Slawter, Acting State Conservationist, *National Resource Conservation Service-Utah (NRCS-UT), USDA*
Gordon Younker, Executive Vice President *UACD*
A.J. Martinez, Bureau of Land Management, *USDI*
William "Bill" Rigby, Southwest Region Exec. Board Member, *NACD*
Joseph Hill, Chair, State committee, *USDA – Farm Service Agency*
Janice Richardson, Water Management Coordinator, Bureau of Reclamation
Penny Trinca, Zone 1 Coordinator, *UACD*
Ken Mills, Zone 2 Coordinator, *UACD*
Ray Loveless, Zone 3 Coordinator, *UACD*
David Pace, Zone 4 Coordinator, *UACD*
Tyce Palmer, Zone 5 Coordinator, *UACD*
Hal Lemon, Zone 7 Coordinator, *UACD*
Chuck Gay, Extension, *USU*
Rand Fisher, Water Quality Div., *UDEQ*
John Fairchild, Wildlife Resources Div., *UDNR*

Commission Staff Support from the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food:
K. N. "Jake" Jacobson, USCC Admin. Officer, *M&CD*
Sherie Edginton, USCC Secretary, *M&CD*
Koy Page, Administrator, Agricultural Loans Section, *M&CD*
Richard Sandberg, Loan Officer, Ag Loans, *M&CD*
Nancy Betzing, Account Technician, *ARDL Loans Section*

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

1. The Minutes of the November 12, 2003 USCC meeting approved. Page 2
2. Approval of FY 2004 ARDL Zone Funding Allocations Page 3

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Cary Peterson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Peterson indicated that a copy of the draft November 12, 2003 USCC meeting minutes were distributed with the meeting notice. He asked for action on these minutes. **The motion was made by Mr. Robert Barry to**

approve the November 2003 meeting minutes as distributed, seconded by Mr. Bill Rasmussen. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Commissioner Cary Peterson reported that the Utah legislature is now in session, and recommended that members contact their legislator on issues of concern. After this legislative session, state staff currently housed in the capitol building will be moved to the new office buildings built directly behind the capitol and renovations will start on the capitol.

He reported that the state-wide snow pack records list all river basins in Utah are at or over 100% of average for this water year to date except the Escalante River watershed. This is a good indication that the five-year drought may be coming to an end in most of the state. He referenced Governor Walker's watershed improvement initiative on about 20 different watersheds.

He reported that all the meat from the imported dairy cow slaughtered in Washington State, which tested positive for BSE (Mad Cow Disease), has been recalled. None of the meat was distributed to consumers. BSE does not cross over to different species. Animals must be exposed to BSE and must be genetically disposed to BSE. Of the 82 cattle that were imported with the effected cow, 23 have been found. Proposals to ship any live cattle from Canada have been stopped during the investigation. Since the report of the infected cow, 30 countries have stopped importing beef and beef products from the US.

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS & ISSUE UPDATE

USU CLIMATEWEB SYSTEM DEMO

Dr. Phil Rasmussen reported that he is working with NASA to download historical and current weather information to one website for easy access to users. They have also been working with the University of Arizona on a website named Rangeview, which collects data from various NASA satellites. He demonstrated some attributes of this website. It will enable people to look at different types of information for different areas, such as counties. The Website address for the USU climate server is <http://climateweb.ser.usu.edu/>. This site has current and historic data from weather sites across the United States.

UPC&D SAGE STEPPE DIE-OFF REHAB INITIATIVE

Mr. A.J. Martinez, BLM and Mr. John Fairchild, DWR reported on the Utah Partners for Conservation & Development (UPC&D) Sage Steppe Die-Off Rehabilitation rangeland/watershed improvement initiative. Partnership field teams will soon be formed to decide the best way to rehabilitate the areas in the state where sagebrush die-off is the worst. Wildlife and domestic livestock grazing as well as the general health of the watersheds will be severely and negatively affected if sage brush die-off isn't reversed or annual weed species are allowed to invade such as Cheat grass. When BLM or DWR rehabilitates a sage steppe community, they plant other native grasses as well as sage brush.

CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM (CSP)

Mr. Harry Slawter, acting NRCS-UT State Conservationist, reported on the new Conservation Security Program (CSP). He handed out a summary of how the program will be managed. NRCS had just recently published CSP rules. Comments on the rules are encouraged and are due by March 2. CSP was authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. This program rewards primary land operators for good conservation stewardship. In the Federal 2003 fiscal year farm bill funding allocation a cap was placed on the amount of CSP incentives that could be paid out at 3.8 billion dollars over ten years. The FY 2004 bill that is being voted on this week by the U.S. Congress the cap would be taken off. Participants in the CSP program will be screened according to a tier process of target level treatments and farm operations for soil and water protection.

AGRICULTURE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT LOAN (ARDL) PROGRAM

LOAN AND REPAYMENT STATUS UPDATE

Mr. Koy Page reported on the ARDL program status as of December 31, 2003. The fund had \$1,024,327 in the bank and \$5,707,679 in the investment account, a total of nearly \$6.7 million. ARDL is receiving \$42,905 in sales tax appropriations monthly, however, there was a quarterly transfer of \$125,000 to Rural Rehab beginning

September. As of December 31, 2003 there were 839 loans totaling \$21,352,857, the average size being \$40,715. There are 142 active applications averaging \$27,096.

NEW YEAR ZONE ALLOTMENT ALLOCATION

Mr. Koy Page reported on an allotment allocation transfer of \$100,000 from Zone 7, making their balance \$328,270 to Zone 5, changing their balance to \$432,769. **A motion was made to approve the allocation transfer by Mr. Ralph Staheli, seconded by Mr. Bob Barry. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.**

OTHER ITEMS

Mr. Koy Page introduced Nancy Betzing as the recently hired Loan Account Technician

CONSERVATION PARTNERS UPDATE

SCD/ZONE 3

Mr. Ray Loveless handed out for Zone 3 written report showing their achievements and future goals.

UTAH ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (UACD)

Mr. Larry Johnson, UACD President, invited the members and partners to participate in the annual breakfast and conservation district activity report to legislature at the Capitol building the next day. The NACD leadership and legislative conference will be held March 16-17 in Washington DC. The NACD Annual Convention will be held in Kona Hawaii the first week in February.

USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Mr. Joe Hill, FSA, reported on a 2 % budget cut in federally funded FSA programs. Elections were held recently for Utah's County FSA Committee members. Election interest is low, he asked the commission members to become more involved with these elections.

USDA NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

Mr. Harry Slawter, acting NRCS-UT State Conservationist, invited USCC members and conservation partners to attend the USDA State Technical Committee (STC) meeting to be held February 5 here at UDAF. The new Conservation Security Program (CSP) rules will be discussed in more detail than given earlier. The main agenda item at the STC meeting will be a review of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program's (EQIP) statewide Animal Feeding Operation/Confined Animal Feeding Operation (AFO/CAFO) FY04 ranking criteria. Other Farm Bill conservation programs will also be addressed. There will be a retirement party for Skip Nelson January 31. There was a listening sessions for CSP January 7 in Spokane Washington. He will be acting as State Soil Conservationist for 3 or 4 months or until the new Soil Conservationist is named.

UT PARTNERS FOR CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (UPC&D) UPDATE

Mr. Sherman Hoskins, DNR, summarized the 1/9/04 UPC&D Directors meeting. Mr. Bob Morgan, UDNR's Executive Director, is the current chair of the UPC&D Directors Council. The main agenda item was to decide on the best cooperative action to take on the sage brush die-off restoration issue. A state-level UPC&D core response team is being formed to address the details of this issue. He handed out a directory of UPC&D members and members of this core team that have been assigned to date. He encouraged those UPC&D member representatives present who haven't named someone to this team yet to do so as soon as possible. He wants private land owners to serve on the core teams if possible. Names could be given to him. The goal is have the team meet in early February to work out some details of the sage steppe rehab effort. One objective is to establish regional partnership committees to start getting action on the ground. This state core team is to report to the UPC&D Directors at their next meeting which will be held 2/23 at DNR. The Directors will address a joint resolution on this issue at this meeting.

Mr. Don Ostler, DWQ, indicated that he supports the conservation partner core team concept to address this important watershed health issue. Mr. Larry Johnson, UACD, expressed appreciation for being a member of the partnership. He said what is good for wildlife is generally good for livestock. Mr. Chuck Gay, USU Extension, reported that the UPC&D Directors endorsed at this meeting a USU lead effort to produce various versions of pocket field guides, starting with one that helps identify Utah grasses and trees. The partnership will help pay for and distribute these full color guide booklets. These booklets should help natural resource professionals and ranchers with their watershed work such as with the sage steppe die-off initiative implementation. There may

also be guides produced on noxious weeds and animal diseases later. Mr. Jake Jacobson, UDAF, stressed the importance of the SCDs involvement in reseeding of sage brush die-off regional teams.

TIMELY OF URGENT ITEMS FROM OTHER PARTNERS

Ms. Janice Richardson reported there is a website that people can research different types of Federal grants and proposals for conservation projects. The new website is "grants.gov/Find". Applications for Water Conservation Field Services program which she works with are now to be applied for through this site. Grant proposals must include a reclamation program. Once at this site home page click on "Search Grant Synopsis", then go to type of grant or Dept. of Interior.

SCC, & SCD ITEMS

STATUS OF 2004 SCD SUPERVISOR ELECTION PROCESS

Mr. Jake Jacobson, UDAF, reported on the 2004 SCD Supervisor elections process. The election process started in December with the activation of an election nominee committee in each SCD, which includes the SCD Chair, County USU Extension Agent, County Commission Chair and the FSA County Commission chair, which chooses their slate of candidates. Plus, candidates can be placed on the ballot with a citizen petition. We have had four calls for petition forms. Three have been submitted. All the candidates were chosen by the January 6 deadline. A new Microsoft Access election software program has been written for the elections by UDAF Information Technology professionals, which replaces the old DOS program. We did have a problem that required reprinting of the ballots which slowed down the mailing of the ballots by about a week and will result in additional costs. But, the majority of the ballots will be mailed by January 27. All legal notices have been sent to area newspapers. The election closes February 17, 2004. As in the past it is recommended that an USCC election committee meet after the close of the election to go over the election process in detail so they can make a certification recommendation to the USCC for the March 8 meeting. After the election results are presented for ratification at the March meeting the candidates will be notified and the newly (re)elected supervisors can take office March 15.

2004 UT LEGISLATIVE ISSUES THAT MAY AFFECT SCDs

Mr. Jake Jacobson handed out reports on different bills that will be presented to the current session of the Legislature. He highlighted the different bills that may be of special interest to conservation district officials.

CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

Next two SCC meetings: March 8 in St. George; May 5 in Salt Lake City
UACD Sponsored Conservation District Day at the Legislature: Jan 23
NACD 2004 Annual Meeting: Feb 1-5 in Hawaii
2004 UT Water Users Workshop: March 9-10 in St. George
2004 UT conservation Field Day: July 29 in Fremont River SCD

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm

Sherie Edginton, Soil Conservation Program Secretary

K.N. "Jake" Jacobson, USCC Administrative Officer